

Department of State

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Request
for Grant Proposals: Study of the U.S. Institutes for
Student Leaders**

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreements

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAE-14-014

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.009

Application Deadline: January 3, 2014

Executive Summary: The Study of the U.S. Branch, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, invites proposal submissions for the design and implementation of two (2) Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders under two different themes: 1) Journalism and New Media and 2) Local, State, and Federal Public Policymaking. Applicants may submit only one proposal to implement one institute under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

Taking place over the course of five weeks at a U.S. academic institution, each Institute should be organized for a group of 20 foreign undergraduate students focusing

on one of the above themes. Information on the scheduling of the Institutes and grouping of participants can be found in Section I.4.

ECA plans to award two Cooperative Agreements for the implementation of two Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders and welcomes applications from accredited post-secondary education institutions in the United States and public and private non-profit organizations (see Eligibility Information, section III). The awarding of Cooperative Agreements for these programs is contingent upon the availability of FY 2014 funds.

It is ECA's intent to award two Cooperative Agreements (one base year plus two option years) for an estimated total amount of \$1,440,000, pending availability of funds and successful performance. Please see section II. Award Information below for additional details.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

I. 1. Authority:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange

Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is to "enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

I. 2. Purpose:

The Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders are intensive academic programs that provide groups of foreign undergraduate students with a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, and institutions. Institutes also include community service activities, leadership development, and opportunities to interact with U.S. peers.

The principal objective of the Institutes is to provide foreign student leaders an in-depth examination of a specific field of study, while also heightening their awareness of the history and evolution of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions, broadly defined. The Institutes should address the influence of principles and values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual rights, freedom of expression, equality, diversity, and tolerance, and should also incorporate a focus on contemporary American life.

I. 3. Overview:

Each program should be five weeks; participants should spend approximately four weeks at an academic institution and approximately one week on an integrated educational study tour, including two to three days in Washington, D.C. at the conclusion of the Institute. The educational travel component should directly complement the academic program.

The academic program should include group discussions, experiential learning activities, and exercises that focus on the theme and include aspects of leadership, teambuilding, collective problem-solving skills, effective

communication, and management skills. Institutes should include a community service component in which the students experience firsthand how not-for-profit organizations and volunteerism play a key role in American civil society.

Local site visits and educational travel should provide opportunities to observe varied aspects of American life and to discuss lessons learned in the academic program.

All programs should foster ECA's mission to promote mutual understanding between citizens of other countries and citizens of the United States. Thus, the programs should include robust opportunities for participants to meet Americans from a variety of backgrounds, to interact with their U.S. peers, and to speak to appropriate student and civic groups about their experiences and life in their home countries.

Institutes should provide an in-depth study of one of the themes outlined below. Participants should gain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

I. 4. Institute Themes:

A) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Journalism and New Media should provide participants with a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a free press in U.S. society. Academic sessions should examine First Amendment rights, editorial independence, journalistic ethics, legal constraints, civic journalism, and social/digital media. The Institute should include the basics of journalism tradecraft: researching, reporting, writing, and editing. The program should also highlight technology's impact on journalism such as the influence of the Internet, the globalization of the news media, the growth of satellite television and radio networks, and other emerging technologies.

Participants will be drawn from South Asia (possible countries include Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka) -

Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2014

B) The Study of the U.S. Institute on Local, State, and Federal Public Policymaking will provide participants with an overview of the U.S. Federalist system of government as well as the role of non-governmental institutions such as civic organizations, the media, and the private sector in the creation of U.S. public policy.

Discussions should explore the responsibilities of local and state government, as well as the three branches of the U.S. government, the system of checks and balances, and the role of local and state governments are in leading and innovating in various policy areas. The Institute should also examine how organizations, the media, and the private sector influence government policy. Within the broader frame of the public policy process, students should be exposed to specific public policy questions on topics such as public finance, rule of law, education, public health, environment, and foreign policy. To the greatest extent possible, Institutes should offer a hands-on approach to topics.

Participants will be drawn from Southeast Europe (possible countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey) - Expected dates of the Institute: June and July, 2014

Please note: ECA reserves the right to assign the final country groupings.

I. 5. Recipients:

ECA is seeking detailed proposals for two different Study of the U.S. Institutes from accredited U.S. colleges and

universities, and other not-for-profit academic organizations with established reputations in a field or discipline related to the specific program theme. See Section III below for eligibility requirements.

I. 6. Participants:

Award recipients will not participate in the selection of candidates. U.S. embassies and consulates will nominate candidates and ECA will make the final selections.

Participants will be drawn from among the priority country groupings listed above. Applicants should indicate any regional expertise. ECA will make the final decisions regarding participating countries and reserves the right to adjust the regions, participating countries, themes, and program dates based upon Department priorities.

Please see the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document for more information on participants.

I. 7. Program Guidelines:

The recipient is responsible for the conception and structure of the Institute and agenda. Proposals must provide a detailed and comprehensive narrative describing the objectives of the Institute. Overall, proposals will be reviewed on the basis of their responsiveness to the **six criteria listed in this RFGP. The accompanying POGI provides program-specific guidelines that all proposals must address fully.**

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional option years, pending successful performance and availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two option years are exercised.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. In a Cooperative Agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine grant monitoring. The Study of the U.S. Branch may request that the recipient

make modifications to the academic residency and/or educational travel components of the program. The recipient will be required to obtain approval of significant program changes in advance of their implementation. The Branch will also perform an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all option years.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2014, \$480,000; FY 2015 - option year one, \$480,000; FY 2016 - option year two, \$480,000, pending successful performance and availability of funds.

Approximate Total Funding: \$1,440,000 - this figure represents the funding for both Institutes for the base year plus two option years, pending successful performance and availability of funds. Each Institute is funded at up to \$240,000 per year.

Approximate Number of Awards: Two

Ceiling of Award Range: \$240,000 (FY-14, base year, one Institute)

Approximate Average Award: \$240,000

Anticipated Award Date: Pending availability of FY-14 funds, April 1, 2014.

Anticipated Project Completion Date: October 31, 2017 **This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award - one base year plus two option years.**

Additional Information: Cooperative Agreements will be awarded for a period of 12 months with options for two additional 12 month periods. To ensure adequate time for post-Institute follow on activities, the final option period will be for 18 months. ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise an option year at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise option years will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

III. Eligibility Information

III. 1. Eligible Applicants:

Applications may be submitted by public and private not-for-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

An applicant organization is defined by the DUNS number of the organization and by the signature of the authorized

representative contained on the "Application for Federal Assistance Form" (SF-424) submitted under this competition.

III. 2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds:

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, recipients must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as recipient cost sharing, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110, (Revised), Subpart C.23 - Cost Sharing and Matching. In the event recipients do not provide the amount of cost sharing stipulated in the

approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

III. 3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

III. 3. A. ECA grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in ECA funding. ECA anticipates making two awards to fund a total of two Institutes, in the amount of up to \$240,000 per Institute per year to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition. Proposals should clearly demonstrate compliance with this requirement.

III. 3. B. Technical Eligibility: It is ECA's intent to fund a total of two (2) thematic Institutes.

Applicants may only propose to implement one Institute and should also serve as the host organization.

Applicant organizations may submit no more than one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant organization, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will be given no further consideration in the review process. All applicants are strongly encouraged to read this RFGP and the accompanying POGI and other documents thoroughly, prior to developing and submitting a proposal, to ensure that proposed activities are appropriate and responsive to the goals, objectives, and criteria outlined in the solicitation. Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation.

Additionally, applications that do not meet the minimum requirements outlined below in section IV.3. will be deemed technically ineligible.

All proposals should clearly indicate the theme, and time line from Section I.4 above, and should demonstrate thematic expertise, as well as any regional expertise, if

applicable.

ECA also reserves the right to adjust the total funding amount to the applicant organizations based upon the quality of the proposed activity and each organization's demonstrated expertise.

IV. Application and Submission Information

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFGP deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

IV. 1. Contact Information to Request an Application

Package:

Please contact Kevin Orchison, Program Officer, The Study of the U.S. Branch, ECA/A/E/USS; SA-5, Fourth Floor; U.S. Department of State; Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 632-3339 to request a Solicitation Package. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

Alternatively, an electronic application package may be obtained from [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Please see section IV.3.F. for further information.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

The Solicitation Package includes the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, a Sample Budget in Microsoft Excel (spreadsheet) format, and the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria, and budget instructions tailored to this competition. The Sample Budget is also available in PDF format. Please contact Kevin Orchison if you require the PDF version of the Sample Budget.

Please specify Kevin Orchison and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

IV. 2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from ECA's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding>, or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

IV. 3. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under IV.3.F. "Application Deadline and Methods of Submission" section below.

IV. 3. A. You are required to have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to apply for a grant or Cooperative Agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a DUNS number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a DUNS number, access <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your DUNS number is

included in the appropriate box of the SF - 424 which is part of the formal application package.

IV. 3. B. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, and budget.

Please refer to the PSI and the POGI in the Solicitation Package for additional information and technical requirements.

IV. 3. C. All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the System for Award Management (SAM) database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

You must have non-profit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all

applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation) In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability

and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

If your organization is a private non-profit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

IV.3 **Dd.** **All ECA awards recipient organizations** must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the

system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM - 6 PM EST, Monday - Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

IV. 3. D. 1. Adherence to All Regulations Governing the J-

Visa: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

ECA will be responsible for acting as Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, and issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://jlvisa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for further information.

IV. 3. D. 2. Diversity, Freedom, and Democracy Guidelines:

Pursuant to ECA's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and represent the diversity of political, social, and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity"

should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to adhere to the advancement of this principle both in program implementation and in program content. Proposals should provide a clearly articulated plan for incorporating diversity into all aspects of the program and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support for Diversity' section of this document, as well as the DIVERSITY FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into proposal submissions.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," ECA "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described

above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

IV. 3. D. 3. Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. ECA recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. ECA expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this RFGP.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change.

Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the RFGP (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to ECA in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA upon request.

IV. 3. D. 4. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

IV. 3. D. 5. Media Outreach/Strategy: ECA requests organizations provide a detailed media strategy that will publicize the exchange program and its impact to broader U.S. audiences. Organizations should indicate how they will manage any public relations resources or how they will leverage their public relations office to issue press releases and digital content on their website and social media platforms to highlight the exchange program. Successful proposals will specify a plan for working in coordination with ECA with any publications to promote the activities and outcomes of the exchange program. Proposals should also include sessions that prepare participants for potential interviews, social media use, and sample media release forms for those willing or unwilling to interact with the media.

IV. 3. E. Budget Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

IV. 3. E. 1. Applicants must submit:

- 1) **The SF-424A**, "Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs," which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program;

- 2) **A detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding.** Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance and the POGI and Sample Budget for specifics. The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional option years, pending successful program performance and availability of funds; and
- 3) **An abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected administrative and program costs for the anticipated total duration of programming** (base year, plus two option years). Budget requests for one Institute may not exceed \$240,000 per year. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

To exercise the option year mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

- 1) timely quarterly performance and financial reports;
- 2) a request in writing to ECA at least 90 days in advance of the expiration of the current program year. This request should be incorporated/highlighted in the third quarterly program report;
- 3) a summary budget that projects program expenses through the end of the current year;
- 4) a detailed budget outlining both administrative and program expenses for the requested option year; and
- 5) a brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

- 1) closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory quarterly performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional option years. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives

will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)

2) review and evaluate all mandatory quarterly program and financial reports;

Please Note:

- All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before the Bureau will exercise additional option years.
- Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
- The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent option years.

IV. 3. E. 2. Please refer to section VI. 2. of this document for information on allowable costs. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

IV. 3. F. Application Deadline and Methods of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Friday, January 3, 2014

Methods of Submission:

Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Find" portion of the system.

Please note: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this RFGP to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, D.C. time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the grants.gov system and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation.

Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety. ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

IV. 3. G. Intergovernmental Review of Applications:

Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

V. Application Review Information

V. 1. Review Process: ECA will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated in section III. 3. and section IV. 3. of this document and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and ECA regulations and guidelines and forwarded to ECA grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. Final

funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for cooperative agreements resides with ECA's Grants Officer.

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

1) **Quality of Program Plan and Ability to Achieve Program**

Objectives: Proposals should exhibit originality and clearly demonstrate how the Institute will meet the objectives laid out in this solicitation. A detailed itinerary and staff work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Activities should be reasonable, feasible, and form a coherent program for participant exploration of the topic. Competitive proposals will clearly promote ECA's mission: to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries to promote friendly and peaceful relations.

2) **Support for Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate

substantive support of the Bureau's diversity policy. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program design and implementation, including grantee/participant selection and placement, and how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives, including the exchange experience. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan, and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.

- 3) **Evaluation:** As explained in section IV.3d.3., proposals should include a plan to evaluate the Institute's success, both as activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is strongly recommended.
- 4) **Cost-effectiveness/Cost-sharing:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support, as well as

institutional direct funding contributions.

- 5) **Institutional Track Record/Ability:** Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs (past exchange programs need not have been ECA funded). ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past ECA grants and cooperative agreements. ECA will consider the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals.
- 6) **Follow-up and Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should discuss provisions made for follow-up with returned participants as a means of establishing longer-term individual and institutional linkages. Proposals also should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (with minimal ECA support) ensuring that ECA supported programs are not isolated events. Please refer to the POGI for additional information on follow-on activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

VI. 1. Award Notices: Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated, and committed through internal ECA procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the ECA's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer and mailed to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

VI. 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following:

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-122, Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations.

OMB Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions.

OMB Circular A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Governments.

OMB Circular A-110 (Revised), Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Nonprofit Organizations.

OMB Circular A-102, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants-in-Aid to State and Local Governments.

OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Government, and Non-profit Organizations.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>

<http://fa.statebuy.state.gov>

VI.3. Reporting Requirements: You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer. The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_forms. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The

electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at:

<http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Failure to comply with

these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award.
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.
- 5.) If the Competition will allow for the exercise of Option Years, applicants must be placed on a mandatory quarterly program and financial reporting cycle. The due dates for these reports will be included in the final assistance award document. The program and financial reports must demonstrate

substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to IV.3.D.3. above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information).

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to ECA upon request.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement contact: Kevin Orchison, U.S. Department of State, Study of the U.S. Branch, ECA/A/E/USS, SA-5, Fourth Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20522-0504, (202) 632-3339, OrchisonKH@state.gov.

All correspondence with ECA concerning this RFGP should reference the above title and the Funding Opportunity number located at the top of this document.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals.

Once the RFGP deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

VIII. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this RFGP are binding and may not be modified by any ECA representative.

Explanatory information provided by ECA that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the RFGP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section VI.3 above.

Evan M. Ryan

Date

Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
Department of State